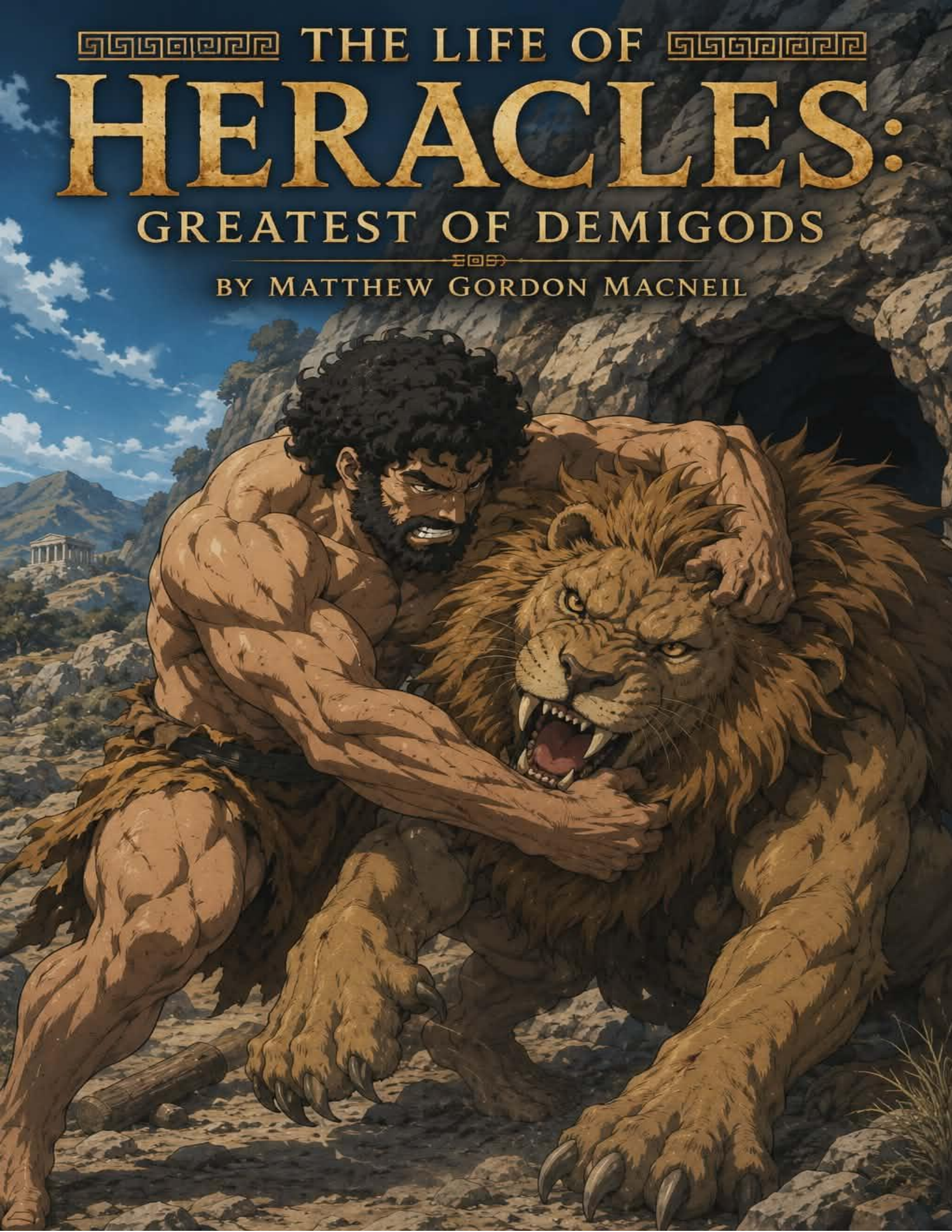
THE LIFE OF HERACLES: GREATEST OF DEMIGODS

BY MATTHEW GORDON MACNEIL



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By Matthew Gordon MacNeil

According to the greatest of ancient Greek writers, including the historians and Prophets Homer and Hesiod, Heracles was born a hundred years prior to the Trojan War, placing his birth year squarely in 1300 BC as the Fall of Troy took place in 1200 BC.

Like other half mortal children of Zeus, Heracles was conceived via deception on part of the King of Olympus, but unlike them his father did not do so out of lust or sexual desire, but rather out of a duty to produce an offspring

capable of aiding the Gods in their war against the Giants, a race of beings totally antagonistic to not only the Gods but mortal kind in general.

Created by the blood of Uranus when Kronos sliced off his penis and it fell upon the earth, the Giants, whether through memories of their past lives as Uranus or simply out of sheer malice, developed a hatred of the Olympian Gods and the beings they helped create, including humanity.

Zeus and his siblings did their best to combat these monsters, always managing to keep them at bay but never able to destroy them completely as they themselves were of pure divine blood.

Thus, as per a prophecy given by the Moirai, the three sisters of Fate, Zeus needed to foster a specific child with a woman who possessed large amounts of divine blood as well as mortal.

To this end Zeus chose Alcmene, a Princess of the Kingdoms of Argos and Mycenae, a granddaughter of the great hero

Perseus, slayer of Medusa and rider of Pagesus, and, more importantly (if perhaps a bit disgusting to modern readers) she was also Zeus's great granddaughter, Perseus being his son.

With this level of divine and mortal blood Alcmene was the perfect conduit for Zeus' purposes. The issue was that Alcmene wasn't a single woman, but already married to Amphitryon, King of Tiryns, a city in Argolia under the overlordship of Mycenae.

To get around this Zeus devised a simple plan. He would transform himself into the likeness of Amphitryon, who was at that moment leading the Tiryns army against the city Thebes, and pretend to be Alcmene's husband for a night in order to bring a child into being.

Of course, as things tend to do, it didn't go so smoothly for the King of Olympus. Amphitryon, missing his wife and desiring to sleep with her, wanted to ride back to the city on the very day Zeus planned on descending from Olympus.

Knowing this the King of the Olympians changed his plans and went the night before, using his Magic to lengthen night so that he could make sure he fertilized Alcmene's eggs and to prevent the possibility of her husband showing up unannounced.

Zeus succeeded in getting Alcmene pregnant and departed back to Olympus, leaving the Queen non the wiser until the next day when the true Amphitryon returned to the city. When she saw him Alcmene was confused, asking why he came back again so soon when the war was not yet won.

Amphitryon, understandably puzzled, asked her what she meant and she told him she slept with him night before. It is then that both realized the truth, that a God had come to her in Amphitryon's form.

Which God, however, remained a mystery to them, and in the meantime the couple resumed their usual sex lives, with Alcmene's egg being fertilized a second time by Amphitryon, leading to twins.

When the time came the baby who would be named Heracles, meaning glory of Hera, a name clearly meant to honour the Queen of Olympus and Zeus' wife, was the second to be born. His elder brother, the son of Amphitryon and thus heir to Tiryns' throne, was named Eurystheus. This left Heracles, the divine offspring, subject to his brother, a twist of fate Zeus, who hoped he would become the King of Mycenae and Argos, found irksome.

But, be that as it may, Zeus made sure in other ways to advance Heracles over his fully human elder brother. On his request Hera and Athena, Heracles' stepmother and elder sister respectively, descended from Olympus to nurse the small baby. Athena escorted Hera to the palace and under the disguise of a servant maid the Queen of Olympus breastfed the baby.

Hera and Athena would come and go in Tiryns for the next year, feeding the baby until he was weened, sowing the seeds for the strength and power he would become known for later on in life as the babe drank in the divine milk.

A year later Alcmene fell pregnant again and gave birth to

another son whom she and the King named Iphicles. Heracles and he would grow up close and remain best friends throughout their lives.

The first known feat Heracles accomplished which is recorded by historians was killing two large snakes, created by the Giants with their Magic, who managed to slip into the palace and slither their way close to the toddler's bed.

Heracles, instead of being terrified as one might expect of a baby, grabbed both snakes by their necks and crushed them to death, showing the first signs of his powerful strength.

During the boy's early childhood his maternal grandfather, Electryon, the King of Mycenae and Overlord of Tiryns, came into conflict with his great nephews, the grandsons of his younger brother Mestor, who demanded he give them portions of the Kingdom as their inheritance.

Electryon flatly refused, asking them what right they had to demand of him anything when Perseus, the great King of Argos and founder of Mycenae, left Kingship in his hands, not

their grandfather's? The brothers, insulted at this rebuke, rose up in rebellion.

Amphitryon, a dutiful vassal to his father in law as well as a good friend, came to his aid in this war, leading a contingent of Tirynian soldiers into battle on behalf of the aged King. The war took a horrendous toll on the royal family of Mycenae, seeing all but one of Alcmene's brothers fall in battle, leaving the King's youngest son, Licymnius, still only a boy of ten, alive.

To make matters worse, in the final battle close to the city of Argos, Amphitryon, while in a fit of battle lust, accidentally killed the elderly King when he tossed his sword at the enemy, hitting Electryon upside the head, cutting into his brain.

The Mycenaen forces won the battle despite this huge blow to morale, killing all but one of Mestor's grandsons who fled the field in the nick of time, but in the aftermath of the victory Sthenelus, a younger son of Perseus, emerged from obscurity and claimed the throne, stealing it from Licymnius.

How and why Sthenelus was able to rip the Crown away from Electryon's natural heir is unknown, though it could lie in the fact that Licymnius was born out of wedlock with a common woman, not Electryon's wife. Whatever the case the elderly man , to shore up his rule, quickly convened a jury and placed the only serious threat, Amphitryon, on trial for the murder of the late King.

Sthenelus did his best to draw a conspiracy of murder and usurpation for the jury, stating unequivocally that Amphitryon meant to kill the King and take his place, asking how it was possible that his sword, supposedly meant for the enemy, found its way into his elder brother's skull?

Of course the obvious answer was that battle, especially in close quarters, was intense. Quick decisions needed to be made or death would result. Amphitryon did not intend to murder his father in law, Overlord, and good friend, that was just how the dice rolled when he flung his blade, but Sthenelus ruthlessly attacked the man's choice, painting him up as a murderer and greedy usurper (an irony considering he was certainly the latter).

The mock trial lasted seven days, each succeeding day more brutal than the last for the King of Tiryns, having his name and character run through the mud. Finally, when the week of hellish character assassination and slander was finished, Sthenelus, ignoring his jurors' opinions, declared Amphitryon unfit to be King, stripping him of his royal title and banishing him and his family from Tiryns.

Alcmene, fearing for Licymnius' safety should he remain in Mycenae with their uncle unprotected, was able to get the boy smuggled out of the city under the cover of night a few days later, adopting her little brother and raising him alongside Heracles and his brothers.

The former royals found their way to the city of Thebes where Amphitryon settled down as a minor noble, able to use what was left of the family funds to allow them to live comfortably.

Meanwhile in Olympus Zeus, needing Heracles to be trained in the arts of war in a way only a Magical creature could provide, wrote Chiron, the leader of the Centaurs in Thessaly, asking for his assistance.

The one chosen to deliver the letter was Pan, the God of the Wilderness, shepherds, rustic music and groves.

Pan, who took the form of a humanoid goat, with hind legs, torso, and face of a goat with light green skin and a white mane of hair flowing down his back and human hands, was a jovial God, happy and good natured. There was nothing more he loved to do than travel and have new adventures so when Zeus chose him for this task he jumped at it.

Descending Mount Olympus Pan walked all the way to Thessaly, taking the opportunity to enjoy the sights, sounds, and smells of every village he entered. Unlike most Gods who tried to conceal themselves from mortal eyes Pan remained in his true form, long ago accepted by the people of Greece as one of the land spirits.

In taverns and in village centers he played his flute, playing both happy and sad songs, including one depressing tune he composed for his deceased wife, a nymph named Echo who he lost due to illness.

Wise and concerned for the well being of mortals, Pan also listened to and offered advice on village problems when asked by elders and individual farmers, his words always improving the situation.

After several stops the God finally reached the plains of Thessaly, the home of the Centaurs. He found Chiron training young members of his Clan on how to use a bow, and promptly strode up with Zeus' message.

"From the King of Olympus."

Pan announced slipping the note into Chiron's hand.

Chiron ordered his charges to keep practicing before taking the note from Pan and trotting off a little ways with him to read the letter. Once the Centaur finished he looked at the Satyr God and mulled the request over.

In the end Chiron accepted the charge of training the young Heracles and sent Pan back with his answer, the God

teleporting to Olympus, his business in the villages done for now.

Once Pan told Zeus Chiron accepted the King, calling upon the Satyr again, tasked him with traveling to Thebes to tell Amphitryon and Alcmene the, to him, good news.

Pan agreed on the condition that he be allowed to stay with the boy and teach him to appreciate music, nature, and animals. To this Zeus agreed and so the God set off to Thebes.

When Pan arrived in the city he sought out the former royal family immediately, finding them close to the Temple of Artemis at the heart of the city. Here he told Amphitryon and Alcmene of Zesu's will, assuring a resistant Alcmene that he would look over the young Heracles as if he were his own son and bring him back safely.

Eventually she relented and let her second youngest go with him, holding Pan to his promise, which the God would do his best to keep.

Heracles, taken to Chiron, was brought by the Centaur and Pan to Mount Pelion where he trained in martial combat, archery, and the arts. He learned how to play the flute from Pan, the Satyr God also teaching the boy about the Gods, the histories of each, and about the animal life of the planet.

The son of Zeus stayed under the care of Chiron and Pan from the time he was three to fifteen, seeing his parents intermittently. At the end of his training Heracles returned with Pan to Thebes, the God, having grown close to the teenager as a father would his son, decided to stay by his side as a companion.

It was while back in Thebes living with his family again that Heracles fell foul of the Minyans, the overlords of the city, who demanded he pay them the respect they believed they deserved.

But the Minyans treated the Thebans like trash, regarding them as backwards barbarians who amounted to little more than convenient tribute payers and slaves, something Heracles, taught to hate Injustice by Chiron and Pan, resented immediately.

A squad of Minyan soldiers attacked the son of Zeus while he and Pan walked in Thebes' streets one day in early May, trying to beat the boy into submission.

Instead Heracles, managing to tear one of the Minyan's swords away from them, used it to overpower each soldier, cutting into their cheeks and mutilating them. He stopped short of killing, wishing for the men to live with the shame of what he did so they could feel how discrimination felt, to get justice for those they had wronged.

The King of the Minyans, Ergnius, not unsurprisingly, demanded the Theban monarch, Creon, to hand the 'criminal' over for execution. Creon, weak willed and terrified of the Minyan military might, scrambled to do as his overlord told him.

Heracles in turn went out onto the Theban streets and with Pan's help he roused the Thebans, calling on them to defend their national honour, asking if they had had enough of Minyan domination.

He gathered several hundred young men ranging from his age and men in their twenties, taking them to the Temples to take the weapons and armour placed their to be blessed by the Gods by their ancestors as the Minyans in past years forbade any Theban from carrying weapons.

Once they were armed the son of Zeus and his Satyr friend led their makeshift army in taking control of the city, placing Creon under house arrest and Heracles acting as interim King.

When word reached the Minyans what had transpired in Thebes Ergnius raised an army and marched against this rebel upstart, his belief in his own superiority causing him to disregard any counsel from his advisors to seek terms of peace.

Heracles wasted little time in meeting Ergnius in the field of battle, the young demi God putting his training by Chiron to good use, butchering dozens of Minyan soldiers himself and killing Ergnius, chopping off the tyrant's head and sending it back to his city as a sign of Theban independence.

News of Erginus' death spread like wildfire across the Greek world, from the Kingdom of Athens to the Greek colonies in Sicily and mainland Italy, Heracles' victory became the talk of everyone, earning the young man his first real taste of fame.

Creon, now overjoyed and grateful to the son of Zeus, offered him the hand of his daughter, Megara, in marriage. Heracles accepted the proposal and he married the Princess in June, being bestowed the guardianship of the city by his father in law and designated his heir as he had no sons.

For four years Heracles enjoyed his status as protector and guardian of Thebes, in this time he and Megara had two sons. Therimachus in 1284 BC, and Creontiades in 1283 BC, both boys born healthy and would remain so.

In Argos Sthenelus, unskilled in the ways of Kingship, had let the Kingdom fall into ruin. Several monsters plagued the land, killing his people and the elderly King could do nothing to stop it.

One of his advisors, a distant cousin to the royal family named Decimos, suggested Sthenelus send a message to Thebes, asking Heracles for his aid.

Sthenelus, loath to even consider the idea, agreed and had Decimos write down a letter asking his great nephew to come to help, to save the realm of his ancestors. Decimos himself rode out from the capital to deliver the message in person, perhaps as a way to escape the ire of his King who felt he pressured him into making this request.

Arriving in Thebes Decimos was escorted into the royal palace and handed over the letter to Heracles, who read it promptly. As one can imagine, the son of Zeus wasn't exactly thrilled to receive this message from the man who drove out his family from their own homeland. He declined, telling Decimos to tell Sthenelus he brought shame on the name of Perseus and should face the monsters himself, only then could he reclaim his honour.

But later that night, while he slept, Zeus appeared to his son, admonishing him for letting innocent people suffer when he could help them. He demanded he go and help Sthenelus

despite what the man had done.

The next morning, with great reluctance, Heracles rose and equipped his weapons and armour. Iphicles, now in his middle teens, urged his elder brother to take him with him and Heracles, having been training him the last year, believed an actual test on the battlefield would be perfect.

Of course Alcmene objected but he persuaded her. Placing the guardianship into the hands of Eurystheus and Amphitryon until he returned, Heracles, Pan, and Iphicles set off.

Before they went to Argos Heracles stopped at Delphi to receive the blessings of Apollo, once he received it they went onward to his great uncle. Sthenelus, resenting the fact Heracles and his two companions were there at all, devised a 'task' that would put them in their places, should they feel that they were better than him.

As their first job he had them muck out his stables. No doubt greatly offended by such a request, the son of Zeus swallowed his pride and did as asked, remembering the admonishment

of his father.

Pan, ever the lover of jokes, took a pile of manure he cleaned up, put it in a bag and, later that night after the job was complete, made his way into the King's bedroom, placing the bag underneath his pillow. During the night Sthenelus, knocking the pillow aside, went face down into the manure bag, getting the mess all over his face and bed.

Furious the elderly King could do little but wash himself and his sheets, he needed their help after all.

The first real job he gave the trio was the klling of the Nenean Lion, a Magical creature that took on the appearance of a lion but with golden fur which was impervious to any metal known to man.

No one knew where it had come from, but it had begun attacking farmers in the Nenean hills, killing many and driving others off.

Accepting the mission Heracles and his friends set off into the Argolian countryside, reaching the village of Cleonae where they hired the services of Molorchos, a shepherd who lost two sons to the Nenean lion and who was eager to see the beast slain.

Leading them to a mountain pass Molorchos said the lion resided inside, coming out to feed or terrorize the citizenry of the area. Thanking the man Heracles ordered his brother and Pan to stay back, he wanted to handle things himself.

But Iphicles being headstrong, and Pan, well....being Pan, ignored the order and strode right along beside him. Heracles sighed and went on.

The lion, within the pass sleeping, awoke at their approach, rising to their feet and letting out a roar that resounded off the rocks.

Heracles kept going, he had a plan in mind.

Pan and Iphicles acted as distractions for the lion, the creature of Magic unsure whether to attack them or Heracles until the young man was on them, grabbing with the beast on the ground.

In the dust and dirt the two fought, the lion desperately trying to slash at Heracles' skin with their claws, which would, if it landed, peel the flesh from his very bones. But the son of Zeus kept their blows at bay and gripped the lion's throat.

No metal could kill the beast but they were not immortal. If he could not cut them, stab them, or shoot them with arrows, Heracles would use his great strength and strangle them to death.

He took no pleasure in the deed, but the creature could not be allowed to continue to harass the people and they would not leave on their own volition, so there was no real choice.

Once the Nenean lion was dead Heracles rose from the dirt and looked down at the creature with his brother and Pan.

"Skin her."

The God instructed,

"Her fur will prove useful."

"Why do you think so?"

Heracles asked his tutor, confused.

"It is impervious to damage, yes? If you wear it you too will benefit from this ability. It is an opportunity you should not pass up, my child."

So Heracles took a knife from his belt and attempted to skin the lion, but the blade snapped against the fur.

Next he tried to use a flint knife he created on the spot but again it snapped in half against the lion's fur.

Frustrated he was about to give up when, using telepathy, the Goddess Athena instructed her younger brother to use the lion's own claws to skin it. Taking her advice he snapped a few of the claws off and used them, and it worked.

Once the lion was skinned Heracles donned the fur as a cloak and picked up the carcass, taking it back to Argos to show his great uncle.

Entering the royal palace the son of Zeus placed the lion down before the King and his court, causing many noblemen and women to gasp in awe.

Sthenelus himself, looking down at the creature, stared blankly at it, unable to comprehend how his great nephew could possibly defeat such a thing. He believed Heracles would die in battle, thereby removing a contender to the throne, but now not only had he survived but brought back his kill.

He was a serious threat to Sthenelus's power.

"Out! Get out!"

The King ordered the trio.

He banned them from entering the palace again, from then on Heracles and his companions were barred from court, only allowed to be inside the city to show off their proof of each task's completion.

Heracles accepted this, but just barely, Pan spending considerable time talking him out of busting down the palace door and killing his great uncle on the spot.

The next task Sthenelus set for him was the killing of the Lernaean Hydra, a giant snake with nine heads, each with venomous fangs. To make matters worse the Hydra had poisonous breath and toxic blood, a child of the black Dragon Typhon, the snake lived in Lake Lerna, blocking off access to a sacred shrine to the Gods and killed anyone who tried to approach.

Together with Pan and Iphicles Heracles set off for Lake Lerna, his cloak over his head to protect himself. He gave each of his companions a torch, instructing them that, whenever he cut off one of the Hydra's heads, they were to burn the stump to prevent, as per the advice Athena gave him, the heads from rengerating.

Reaching the Lake Heracles and his friends spread out while approaching the waters. The son of Zeus shot arrows at the Lake to draw the Hydra out, which did the trick, the giant serpent emerging from the waters soon thereafter in a rage.

Heracles went to work immediately, dodging the serpent's massive heads trying to take chunks out of him with their fangs, chopping off the heads one by one, Pan and Iphicles running in to scorch the stumps, stopping the blood from flowing and the head from coming back.

With the final head, the original one and immortal according to Athena, Heracles sliced it off, had Iphicles scorch the stump, and then he took the head, still writhing and trying to sink its fangs into him, to a nearby rock where, lifting the

boulder and placing the Hydra's head under it, smashed it down, doing this repeatedly until the Hydra, immortal in the sense that almost no wound could kill it, was nothing but a puddle of blood and gore.

Heracles took a neck from one of the heads back to Argos to show the King, tossing it at one of the palace guards to present to his master.

The next and final task Sthenelus needed him to do was defeat the giant Geryon, who came into Greece from what is now modern France.

This Geryon, born from the blood of the slain Medusa, was over fifteen feet in height and possessed three heads. This would be the greatest test of Heracles' strength and he well knew it for he spent several weeks preparing before setting out with Pan and his brother to this foreign land.

This land, inhabited by people known as Galatai by the Greeks (later as Gauls to the Romans) and the land itself known as Gallia, was divided into several different tribes, all ruled by

either a King or Queen. The Galatai, known for their equality between the sexes, valued honour, friendship, loyalty to family, and bravery above all else. It was dangerous place for those unaffiliated with any tribe, but Heracles was determined to succeed in his quest and did not falter.

The Galatai tribes all claimed descent from Donn, the God of the Dead in their religious tradition, and this belief gave them an edge in combat as they did not fear death as others did, even against enemies who were far stronger than they, as they believed Donn would collect their souls and take them to his house where they would feast and drink and enjoy themselves until they reincarnated into a new life. Therefore when Heracles, Pan, and Iphicles stumbled onto the tribal territory of a man named Eurytion, the man, a shepherd by trade, did not think twice of attacking them with his guard dog Orthrus.

Heracles dealt with them easily, striking both down with his war club, crushing their skulls. The trio continued on until they reached the city of Alesia, capital of the Mandubii tribe in what is now northeastern France. The Mandubii were at this time ruled by King Bretanos, a middle aged man who was the most powerful King in the region.

He had one daughter, Celtine, but no sons, and at the time Heracles and his group visited the tribal capital Bretanos was constructing a wall around the town to protect it from raiders (a constant in Galatai society). Wanting to prove themselves trustworthy to the King Heracles, Pan, and Iphicles helped build this wall, spending three weeks at the task.

During this time Heracles caught the eye of Celtine who, up to this time, had rejected every suitor in her tribe as she did not find them worthy of her hand. An extremely independent woman even among a people who allowed women to be such, Celtine knew immediately she desired Heracles.

Not as a husband, mind you, but to be the father of her children for in Galatai society casual sex, while not seen as ideal, was not given the stigma of other societies. No one would shun Celtine for being a single mother.

She set to work winning Heracles' affections and by the end of the construction Celtine succeeded. Heracles and she slept together several times before he left Alesia to continue the hunt for Geryon, getting her pregnant. Before he left Heracles

gave Celtine a bow he hand crafted to give to their child as a gift in case he did not return.

It turned out Heracles did not return to Alesia, so the bow was all that his offspring from Celtine received, but rather than have just one child as both believed, the Mandubii Princess had triplets, all boys.

Their names were Keltos, Galos, and Iberos, these three would grow up into great warriors of the Mandubii and become the ancestors of all the Celtic peoples: The Irish, Scots, Welsh, Cornish, Britons, Manx, Bretons, and Galicians, as well as their own Galatai tribes, their bloodlines spreading out into every family in the country, and in this way they became among the ancestors of the French and those who descend from them.

Following their time in Alesia Heracles' small company tracked down Geryon to an open field miles away from the Mandubiii 's territory.

They caught the giant sleeping on a large boulder, Heracles sneaking up on him and shooting an arrow laced in the

Hydra's blood into his chest.

Woken by the sting, Geryon rolled off the rock and struck the ground, shaking the earth. Before the giant rose again Pan and Iphicles shot him again, poisoned arrows sinking into his arms and legs.

With his foe immobile Heracles went in for the kill, but suddenly an arm came up, smacking the son of Zeus away like a fly and the giant rose.

Heracles bounced back and ordered his friends to run as he did himself, retreating back across the field as Geryon advanced on them, each step he took shaking the ground beneath their feet.

Reaching a river the local Galatai called Anthemus Heracles and the others stopped, cornered, the river raging too fast to cross.

Geryon's footsteps grew louder, Heracles deciding to risk it

and turn to face his would be killer. Nocking another arrow into his bow the son of Zeus held his breath and released it, aiming at the central head of the giant, believing if he killed it, the others would die as well. He had no real reason to believe this was the case, but desperate times demanded desperate action be taken.

By a stroke of luck (or perhaps divine aid?) the arrow struck right in the forehead, killing the central head and the poison spread down into the body, eliminating the other two and destroying Geryon. Once the giant was dead Heracles, as per his great uncle's demand, rounded up his sheep and herded them all the way from Gallia into Greece, leaving them outside the city gates of Argos.

With this complete Heracles bid the usurper farewell and returned to Thebes, eager to see his his wife and children again as well as his parents, but when he returned happiness wasn't what he found.

Instead he found heartbreak and sorrow.

In his absence his elder brother, jealous of him and his growing fame, rebelled against Creon with the help of a band of mercenaries he hired. When Amphitryon tried to intervene Eurystheus killed him, and he didn't stop here. He killed Alcmene, Megara, her two sons, and Creon in a bloody attack on the palace, wanting no obstacle to his rule.

He fortified Thebes against his younger brother's return, but it did little good. Once Heracles heard his parents, wife, and most importantly, his sons were dead, he flew into a rage, one which neither Pan nor Iphicles could calm him from. The son of Zeus, wearing the cloak of the Nenean lion, tore through the city gates, killing any who got in his way, leaving dozens of bodies in the streets.

The guards at the palace stood and defended their Lord, only for Heracles to cleave right through them. He burst through the door and stormed into the throne room where his older brother sat trembling, his bodyguards throwing down their arms in surrender.

This didn't save them.

Heracles executed each one, five in all, counting them as guilty in the murder of his family. He hacked off their heads and kicked them to the side of the throne room before going after Eurystheus.

He dragged his brother off his stolen throne and tossed him like a doll to the floor. Holding him down, ignoring the pleas for mercy, Heracles repeatedly stabbed Eurystheus in the chest and then ran his blade across his brother's throat.

He watched as Eurystheus squirmed with what little energy he had left, fighting to stay alive a bit longer, but finally the life left his eyes.

After killing his elder brother Heracles, losing his entire reason for being in one fell swoop, left Thebes and began travelling the world alone, telling Pan and Iphicles to remain in Greece.

For ten years Heracles wandered the world, traveling to many different lands and Kingdoms, fathering children with women as he went, and fighting monsters who threatened villages and townships, earning a reputation across Europe.

The places where he fathered children are as follows:

Germany where his offspring, like their Galatai brothers, became ancestors of the Germanic tribes.

In Arabia he stayed awhile with a woman named Sarah, a descendant of Epher, the grandson of the biblical patriarch Abraham. She bore him two sons and they would go on to invade Libya and migrate to Lydia where their grandchildren would become among the followers of Brutus of Troy and go to Britain with them, becoming ancestors to the Britons.

Reaching the British Isles before his great grandchildren, Heracles came ashore in what would become the Kingdom of Cornwall, here he sired a son with a local woman. The boy's name was Guren, and he founded the first tin mine in the land, and his descendants would later marry into the British royal family, specifically his descendant Gwendolen would marry Locrin, Brutus' eldest son, and through their son Maddan Guren became the ancestor of Arthur Pendragon, numerous Scottish Clans, English, Irish, and Welsh noble families, and even the current British monarch, Charles III.

In Italy Heracles lived among the Greek colonists there, even spending time on the Aventine Hill where Rome would later stand. Heracles fathered a child with an Greco-Italian woman who was named Fabius, who's descendants would later go on to become a noble family under the Roman Republic and Empire.

Another Roman family who was born from a liasion Heracles had with an Italian woman was the Antonia family, descending from Heracles' son Anton. The most famous member of this family was Marcus Antonius, the husband of Cleopatra. Another person who was descended from the Antonia, and thus Heracles, was Julia Venus, the daughter of the Roman Emperor Claudius and Queen of Britain as the wife of King Caradoc, and an ancestress to most subsequent Kings of Britain, including, again, Charles III.

In the final years of his travels Heracles reached India, settling down for awhile in a village known as Pandya. Here, like in so many other places, he took a local woman as his partner and fathered a child with her. This child, named Pandae in honour of her home, would later grow up and, possessing her father's

strength, become Chieftess of her village. Her descendants would later go on to carve out the Pandya Kingdom in Southern India which lasted for centuries.

Finally, while in India, Heracles was visited in his dreams by his father. It was time to return, he was needed to fight against the giants.

Reluctent to go, having bonded with his Indian partner in a way he hadn't thought possible after Megara, Heracles obeyed his father's summons and returned to Greece in the summer of 1270, going to and climbing up Mount Olympus where he entered the realm of the Gods.

Alongside Pan, his siblings, and his father and the other Gods Heracles fought against the enemies of the Divine, striking down many giants as they climbed up towards celestial Olympus. This war lasted a year, but seemed to be a few days to mortal kind. At the end of it, battle worn and weary, Heracles was ready to live in peace.

His father, asking his son what he wished as a reward for

helping to defeat the giants, was surprised when Heracles told him he wanted Prometheus, the friend of humankind, set free.

Zeus tried to refuse but Heracles demanded it. Prometheus, he said, did nothing wrong and if Zeus wanted to make an enemy of him, he was free to do so.

The King of the Gods, fearful of what this could mean, relented, granting Prometheus' his freedom. With this final victory achieved Heracles left Olympus and returned to the mortal world.

Now free once more to live life on his own terms Heracles set out on one more adventure, to help King Jason of Iolcus find the Golden Fleece which saw him and the other Argonauts venture into the Black Sea region, landing in modern day Georgia where, after many tasks were completed, Jason was successful in gaining the Fleece.

Growing tired of the wanderer's life and the life of a warrior Heracles returned once more to Greece where, using what

money he obtained on his travels, purchased a farm in the countryside of Argos, settling down to a quiet life.

Here he married a second time, this time to a woman named Nira, a common woman who he met while traveling to the city. The two had a happy, peaceful marriage which was blessed by five children, four sons and one daughter. Through his sons Heracles would become the ancestor to the later Kings of Sparta. The Argead Dynasty of Macedonia, who's most famous member, Alexander the Great, would name one of his sons Heracles after his famed ancestor. And the Kings of Argos, his descendants winning back the Argolid throne in the coming centuries.

As for the son of Zeus himself, Heracles lived into old age, passing away in his bed at the age of eighty five in 1215, five years before the beginning of the Trojan War.

When his soul left his body, his elder brother, Hermes, a guide to the dead, came to him and guided Heracles to the Elysian Fields, a paradise of beautiful green hills and where a warm breeze always kept its inhabitents cool.

Waiting for him here was Megara, his parents, and his two young sons, reunited at last.